

HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT.

Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the Year 1921.

To the Chairman and Members of the Council.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

The Report this year is a short one based on a schedule issued by the Ministry of Health.

GENERAL STATISTICS.

Area (in acres), 55,099.
Population (1921), 12,834.
Number of inhabited houses
Rateable value, £94,646.
Sum represented by a penny rate, £329 14s. 2d.

VITAL STATISTICS.

Births:	Male.	Female.	Total.
Legitimate ...	108	135	243
Illegitimate ...	3	4	7
Total ...	111	139	250
Deaths ...	61	75	139
Infant Deaths ...	19	4	14
Birth rate	19.2
Death rate	10.7
Infant Death rate	56

There were no deaths of illegitimate children.

There were no deaths from measles or scarlet fever.

There were 3 deaths from whooping-cough, one from diphtheria, four from influenza, seven from pulmonary tuberculosis and two from other tuberculous disease.

There were 22 deaths from malignant disease.

There were two deaths from diseases connected with child birth but not from sepsis, and five from prematurity.

The statistics picture a fairly good condition of health except in the deaths from malignant disease. It has to be remembered though that many of these cases are in old people.

The statistics are based upon a population of 12,978 people, and in arriving at them the fact that Walsworth was joined to the Hitchin Urban District in April had to be taken into account.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES.

The following cases were notified during the year:—Scarlet fever, 24; Pulmonary tuberculosis, 18; Other tuberculous, 6; Diphtheria, 8; Pneumonia, 3; Septicaemia, 1; Typhoid fever, 1; Measles, 1.

The cases of scarlet fever and diphtheria were all promptly removed as soon as notified and the only slight epidemic which occurred was at Knebworth. This however soon died out. I am still hoping to see the cases of tuberculosis reduced with improved sanitation and housing.

SANITARY ADMINISTRATION.

Water Supply.—A good supply of water has been found at Pirton for the Housing Scheme and the well has been fitted with pumping engine and a small tower.

At Cockernoe a good supply suitable for the whole district has been tapped.

An inquiry by the Ministry of Health was held at Codicote, but sanction to proceed with this scheme has not yet

been obtained. It is an urgent matter that this sanction should be given without further delay and nothing more can be done with regard to the new houses being occupied until a water supply is obtained. The urgent need in the village for a new supply was quite apparent in the evidence given at the inquiry.

St. Ippolytts is to receive a supply from the Hitchin Urban water works, but this supply is not yet satisfactory.

It is proposed that at Weston the Council should take over the water works there. This gave a capital supply during the drought of last summer.

Owing to the dry summer there was a great scarcity of water in many of the villages. At Tea Green the well was deepened six feet and a good supply resulted. There has been an improvement since then and when all the new schemes are in practice a very considerable improvement in the district will result. A plentiful supply of water is a necessity to public health.

Sewers.—Sewers have been laid in the parishes of Kimpton, Cockernhoe, Codicote, Willian, Ippolytts, Weston, Pirton, and a portion is now being laid at Knebworth. The sewer at Kimpton has been extended to the end of the village. This will enable the whole of the properties, which now have drains to cesspools, to be connected with the main sewer.

At Cockernhoe settling tanks have been constructed and land has been acquired at the outfall to admit of land irrigation.

The extension of the sewer at Codicote to the Council's Cottages will now admit of the sewage from the higher end of the village to flow through the main sewer to the outfall works.

At Willian the sewer has been extended to the Council's Cottages, and all houses along the route have been connected.

At St. Ippolytts a sewer has been laid to land about 200 yards from the London Road and settling tanks have been constructed at the outfall. The sewage from your cottages will therefore be carried and treated on land well removed from human habitation.

At Ickleford the sewer has been extended along Icknield Way to your cottages. At the outfall of the old sewer a settling tank has been constructed, the effluent from which discharges into the old sewer ditch.

At Pirton a sewer has been laid from the new cottages to land about 200 yards distant. The old sewer has been connected to this system and settling tanks have been constructed. Nearly the whole of the sewage is now being treated on land, and the nuisance of the sewage discharging into the ditch near Willow Close has been abated.

At Weston land has been acquired and a sewer with outfall works is being constructed. The old sewer which formerly discharged into a pond near the highway has been connected.

At Whitwell the sewer has been extended to your cottages at Horn Hill. About 1,100 yards of sewer is being laid from Deard's End to your Cottages at

Old Knebworth. This has been laid at such a depth that the whole of Old Knebworth may be drained through it and so connected up to the main sewage system of Knebworth. When this can be done it will be a great advantage to Old Knebworth, which, at present, has no drainage system.

Nuisances.—The number of legal notices served was 57, and the notices were all complied with. Many minor nuisances were found and remedied without notice.

Slaughter-houses and Bakehouses.—There are 15 slaughter-houses and 16 bakehouses in the district. They have all been inspected once in three months.

Cowsheds.—There are 62 of these, each of which have been inspected at least twice a year.

The above report from Mr. Hooper, the Sanitary Inspector, shows that much progress has been made during the year.

HOUSING.

During the year we have made considerable progress in going through the District village by village and by careful inspection deciding how best to determine how to deal with the problem of unfit houses and over-crowded ones. A table has been drawn up by Mr. Gunning, the Housing Inspector, at my request and is appended to this report. It will be seen that much work has been done but it has been a pleasure to do it, because the Council has recognised the fact that care has been shown, and has enabled us to effect a real improvement in many villages. It is an interesting fact of the present Housing situation, that although the Council is erecting 400 houses, and that great moderation has been shown in dealing with unfit and over-crowded homes, the demand for houses has far exceeded the supply. The difficulties of proper housing are great, but I feel sure the Council will never regret the action it has taken if it considers the larger view of public health and national gain.

SCHOOL INSPECTION.

The number of children examined was 669.

Number of defects found:—

Unclean ...	81
Mal-nutrition ...	47
Decayed teeth ...	216
Enlarged tonsils & Adenoids ...	262
Unvaccinated ...	211
Defective eyesight ...	50
Tuberculosis ...	6
Rickets ...	6
Other defects ...	226

The School Nurse is now so valuable that it is to be regretted that in one or two villages the presence of the Nurse is not more frequent. The work is too arduous in some cases and long distances to travel make it very difficult. It is much to be hoped that more nurses will soon be available and in that way the district each one will have to serve will be made smaller.

HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING ACT,

Detail of Inspector's Report for 1921.

Total No. of Inspections and Re-inspections	Unfit Cottages and Closing Orders.								Remedial Work on Unfit Cottages.	
	No. reported during year.	No. of Closing Orders sealed by Council.	Appeals to the Ministry Notified.	No. With-drawn.	Dismissed by Ministry.	Notices to Occupiers to Vacate Unfit Cottages.	Unfit Cottages vacated with notice.	Unfit Cottages vacated after notice.	No. rendered reasonably Fit.	No. Voluntarily Demolished.
976	15 (Total of 305 for complete Inspection).	120	12	9	3	34	29	10	19 8 without Notice. 11 Closing Orders determined.	17

Overcrowding.			New Cottages—Housing (Assisted) Schemes.			
No. reported.	Notices served.	No. Abated.	Total Cottages to be erected.	No. Complete and Occupied Dec. 31, 1921.	No. of Unfit Cottages vacated for New Cottages.	No. of Cases of Over-crowding abated by provision of New Cottages.
20 (Total for Inspection of district 224).	63	51	400	89 4 complete in 1920.	20	45

Yours very faithfully,

NORMAN MACFADYEN,

(Medical Officer of Health).

